BLACKWATER CEDAR SWAMP

SIZE: ca. 440 acres **BIODIVERSITY RANK:** B4

LOCALITY: Southampton County

QUADRANGLE: Riverdale **QUADRANGLE CODE:** 3607658

LOCATION: The site lies east of Route 258 and west of the Blackwater River, about a mile northwest of Cherry Grove.

NATURAL HERITAGE RESOURCES SUMMARY TABLE

SCIENTIFIC NAME	COMMON NAME	GLOBAL RARITY RANK	STATE RARITY RANK	USFWS STATUS	VA LEGAL STATUS	ELEMENT OCCURRENCE RANK
communities:						
OLIGOTROPHIC SEASONALLY FLOODED FOREST		-	-	-	-	AB
plants:						
CALYCANTHUS FLORIDUS	SWEET-SHRUB	G5T4T5	S2?	-	-	BC
CHAMAECYPARIS THYOIDES	ATLANTIC WHITE CEDAR	G4	S2	-	-	B
KALMIA ANGUSTIFOLIA	SHEEP LAUREL	G5	S2S3	-	-	D
SARRACENIA PURPUREA	NORTHERN PITCHER-PLANT	G5	S2	-	-	D
ZENOBIA PULVERULENTA	DUSTY ZENOBIA	G5	S1	-	-	U

SITE DESCRIPTION: The site supports one of Virginia's finest Atlantic white cedar (Chamaecyparis thyoides) swamps. This type of swamp, sometimes classified as "pocosin", occurs on deep peat. Ericaceous shrubs are prevalent, including two rare species, dusty zenobia (Zenobia pulverulenta) and sheep laurel (Kalmia angustifolia). Walking through the swamp is exceedingly difficult due to the thick tangle of tall shrubs and laurel-leaf greenbrier (Smilax laurifolia); this latter species is locally known as "throat-slasher". The rare species here are generally not thrifty. The small-stature rarities are being shade-suppressed by the larger plants, while the splendid Atlantic white cedars are dying and not being replaced by new cohorts. The pocosin and its rarities can only be restored by reintroducing fire to the wetland system. Fires originating in the dry turkey oak (Quercus laevis) vegetation to the west no doubt once regularly burned into the pocosin. Presently, almost all of this turkey oak vegetation has been destroyed, and with it, the original fire regime.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION: The primary consideration in drawing the boundary for this site is to include sufficient land to permit safe prescribed burning. Because this pocosin has not burned in several decades, a tremendous amount of fuel is present, and any future fire would likely be catastrophic unless very carefully managed.